

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2022

Remarks on Signing Legislation To Provide a Resolution to Unresolved Disputes Between Railroad Industry Employers and Workers and an Exchange With Reporters

December 2, 2022

The President. Let me begin by thanking my team here. They did one heck of a job in averting what could have been a real disaster and ended up with a good product. But we still have more work to do, in my view, in terms of ultimately getting paid sick leave not just for rail workers, but for every worker in America. That is a goal I had in the beginning, and I'm coming back at it.

So—but good morning. The bill I'm about to sign ends a difficult rail dispute and helps our Nation avoid what, without a doubt, would have been an economic catastrophe at a very bad time in the calendar.

Our Nation's rail system is literally the backbone of our supply chain, as you all well know. And so much of what we rely on is delivered on our rail, from clean water to food and gas and every other good. A rail shutdown would have devastated our economy.

Without freight rail, many of the U.S. industries would literally shut down. In the event of a shutdown, my economic advisers report that as many as 765,000 Americans, many of them union members themselves, would have been put out of work for the first time and—excuse me, within the first 2 weeks of this—of the strike alone.

Communities could have lost access to chemicals necessary to ensure clean drinking water. Farms and ranches across the country would have been unable to feed their livestock. And thanks to the bill Congress passed and what I'm about to sign, we've spared the country that catastrophe.

At the same time, we ensured workers are going to get a historic 24-percent wage increase over the next 5 years, improved working conditions, and peace of mind around their health care.

And look, I know this bill doesn't have paid sick leave that these rail workers and, frankly, every worker in America deserves, but that fight isn't over. I didn't commit we were going to stop just because of—we couldn't get it in this bill, that we were going to stop fighting for it. I've supported paid sick leave for a long time, and I'm going to continue that fight till we succeed.

And I want to thank Congress, Democrats and Republicans, for acting so quickly. I know this was a tough vote for Members of both parties. It was a tough—for me. But it was the right thing to do at the moment to save jobs, to protect millions of working families from harm and disruption, and to keep supply chains stable around the holidays and to continue the progress we've made and we've been continuing to see on the economy.

For months, you couldn't look anywhere without seeing headlines screaming, "Gas prices at the pump are up." But look, folks, gas prices are down, and you barely hear anything about it right now. And they're continuing to go down.

And there's a lot more that's going to happen. And they're down more than \$1.50 a gallon since the summer, and they continue to fall. And our economy continues to grow. The economic report—the GDP is up even more than it was previously thought. We continue to create jobs, lots of jobs.

And today we've learned that the economy added 263,000 jobs in November. Now—we've now created 10.5 million jobs since I took office, more than any administration in history at this

point in a Presidency. And 750,000 of them are domestic manufacturing jobs: "Made in America."

Unemployment rate remains near an alltime, 50-year low: 3.7 percent. And wages for working families—I want to say this again—wages for working families, in fact, over the last couple of months, have gone up—up. And these wage increases are larger than the increase in inflation during that same period of time. And so we're in a position now where we—things are moving, and they're moving in the right direction.

As we go into the holiday season, here's what this all means. The Americans are working, the economy is growing, wages are rising faster than inflation, and we've avoided a catastrophic rail strike. It means our plan to build the economy from the bottom up and the middle out—you're tired of hearing me say that, but it's working. And the wealthy are still doing very well while the middle class and the poor are having a shot.

I want to thank Congress once again for being partners today, for averting this disaster, and keeping our economy on a stable footing during the holiday season. I want to thank you all. And now I'm going to reach over here and sign this bill and make it official.

This is the House Joint Resolution 100. Okay.

[At this point, the President signed the resolution.]

And by the way, I really can't emphasize enough how much I appreciate the team behind me working with business and labor to get this done to avoid this. But otherwise, it's a really good bill lacking only one thing, and we're going to get that one thing done before it's all over.

But anyway, thank you, thank you, thank you.

[The President got up from the signing desk and began thanking administration officials, beginning with Celeste Drake, Made in America Director at the Office of Management and Budget, followed by National Economic Council Director Brian C. Deese and Secretary of Agriculture Thomas J. Vilsack.]

Appreciate it, thanks.

Georgia Senatorial Runoff Election

Q. Mr. President, why aren't you going to Georgia to help Senator Warnock?

The President. I'm going to Georgia today to help Senator Warnock—not to Georgia; we're going to help Senator Warnock because I'm doing a major fundraiser up in Boston today for—

[As he spoke, the President shook hands with Secretary of Transportation Peter P.M. Buttigieg and Secretary of Labor Martin J. Walsh.]

Secretary Buttigieg. Thank you, Mr. President.

Secretary Walsh. Thank you, sir.

The President. —for the—our next and continued Senate candidate and Senator.

Thank you.

Q. [Inaudible]—buy oil and refill the Strategic Reserve, Mr. President?

Railroad Worker Paid Sick Leave

Q. Mr. President, how soon should rail workers expect sick days?

The President. As soon as I can convince our Republicans to see the light.

Q. And is time for the U.S. Government to step in to prevent the spread of anti-Semitism?

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:53 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. H.J. Res. 100, approved December 2, was assigned Public Law No. 117–216.

Categories: Bill Signings and Vetoes : Railroad industry employers and workers, legislation to provide resolution to unresolved disputes, signing remarks; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Buttigieg, Peter P.M.; Deese, Brian C.; Drake, Celeste; Vilsack, Thomas J.; Walsh, Martin J.; Warnock, Raphael G.

Subjects: Bipartisanship; Gasoline costs; Georgia, senatorial runoff election; Global supply chain disruptions, efforts to address; Household income and wages; Job creation and growth; Management and Budget, Office of; National Economic Council; Paid family and sick leave; Railroad industry employers and workers, legislation to provide resolution to unresolved disputes; Secretary of Agriculture; Secretary of Labor; Secretary of the Treasury; Unemployment rate.

DCPD Number: DCPD202201092.